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PENN YAN BILL'S
WOOFING

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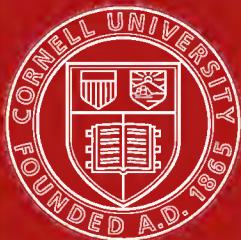


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PENN-YAN BILL'S WOOING

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POEM BY
EUGENE FIELD
(NEVER BEFORE HAVING APPEARED IN TYPE)



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E.F.

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St. Louis, Mo., February 9, 1904.

Mr. W. K. Bixby,
St. Louis, Mo.

MY DEAR MR. BIXBY:

In disposing to you of the book of poems of the late Eugene Field entitled "My Book," I have parted with a most rare treasure, but I know that in passing into your hands, it finds an owner appreciative of its value and of the author, and worthy of its proprietorship. During our long friendship and association, which began in 1873, we had exchanged many courtesies, and wanting to do something for me, he conceived the idea of dedicating to me this book. He began it in 1887, and worked in it from time to time until 1888. During that year while on a visit from my home in Montana, I visited him in Chicago, at which time he showed me the book. I begged him to let me take it with me, for

the purpose of showing it to my friends in Missouri and Kentucky. He consented, but said he had not quite finished it, and wanted to make several additions. So I promised to bring it back to him, but when I arrived in St. Louis I received a telegram from Montana, announcing the death of my business partner, which necessitated my immediate return home, so I had not the time to stop in Chicago, and hurried home, taking the book with me.

I had intended going east from time to time after that, when I expected to take the book with me for him to finish, but circumstances prevented, and I never saw him alive after that visit.

You will find in the book, among other poems unpublished, the one entitled "Penn-Yan Bill," which delighted him so; and in which he figures me as the hero. He wrote that poem in my room in the Grand Pacific Hotel in Chicago one evening that he spent with me, and did it while I wrote three letters; the time occupied being only about an hour and a quarter, and his only cue being the fact that I was on my way to Kentucky

to visit a young lady in whom I was interested, and whose name was Susie.

I have given you this little data, thinking it might be of interest to you in having the book. I sincerely trust it may bring you unbounded pleasure; and thanking you for your courtesy, and with the hope that it may cement a most pleasant and lasting friendship between us, I beg to remain,

Cordially and sincerely yours,

WILLIAM C. BUSKETT

PENN-YAN BILL'S WOOING

In gallus old Kentucky where the grass is
 very blue,
Where the liquor is the smoothest and the
 girls are fair and true;
Where the crop of by-God gentlemen is full
 of heart and sand
And the stock of four time winners is the
 finest in the land;
Where the democratic party in bourbon
 hardihood
For more than half a century unterrified
 has stood;
Where nod the black-eyed-Susans to the
 prattle of the rill—
There—there befell the wooing of Penn-
 Yan Bill.

Down yonder in the cottage that is nestling
 in the shade

Of the walnut trees that seem to love that
quiet little glade,
Abides a pretty maiden of the bonny name
of Sue—
As pretty as the black-eyed flow'rs, and
quite as modest, too;
And lovers came there by the score—of
every age and kind,
But not a one (the story goes) was quite to
Susie's mind;
Their sighs, their protestations and their
pleadings made her ill—
When, all at once, upon the scene hove
Penn-Yan Bill!

He came from old Montana, and he rode a
broncho mare—
He had a rather how-dy-do and rough-and-
tumble air;
His trousers were of buckskin, and his coat
of furry stuff,
His hat was drab of color and its brim was
wide enough;
Upon each leg a stalwart boot reached just
above the knee,

And in the belt about his waist his weepons
 carried he;
A rather strapping lover for our little Susie,
 still
She was *his* choice, and *he* was *hers*—was
 Penn-Yan Bill.

We wonder that the ivy seeks out the oaken
 tree
And twines her tendrils round him, tho'
 scarred and gnarled he be;
We wonder that a gentle girl, unused to
 worldly cares,
Should choose a mate whose life has been a
 constant scrap with bears;
Ah, 'tis the nature of the vine—and of the
 maiden, too,
So, when the bold Montana boy came from
 his lair to woo,
The fair Kentucky blossom felt all her
 heartstrings thrill
Responsive to the purring of Penn-Yan
 Bill.

He told her of his cabin in the mountains
 far away—

Of the catamount that howls by night, the
 wolf that yawps by day;
He told her of the grizzly with the auto-
 matic jaw,
He told her of the Injun who devours his
 victims raw!
Of the jayhawk with the tawdry crest and
 whiskers in his throat—
Of the great gosh-awful sarpint and the
 Rocky Mountain goat;
A book as big as Shakespeare's or as Web-
 ster's you could fill
With the yarns that emanated from Penn-
 Yan Bill.

Lo, as these mighty prodigies the moun-
 taineer relates,
Her pretty mouth falls wide agape—her
 eyes get big as plates!
And when he speaks of varmints that in the
 Rockies grow,
She shudders and she clings to him and tim-
 idly cries "Oh!"
And then says he: "Dear Susie, I'll tell
 you what to do:

You be my wife, and none of these 'ere
things shall pester you!"
And she? She answers, clinging close and
trembling yet: "I will"—
And then he gives her one big buss—does
Penn-Yan Bill.

Avaunt, ye poet lovers, with your wishy-
washy lays!
Avaunt, ye solemn pedants, with your musty,
bookish ways!
Avaunt, ye smirking dandies, who air your
etiquette
Upon the gold your fathers worked so long
and hard to get!
How empty is your nothingness beside the
sturdy tales
Which mountaineers delight to tell of bor-
der hills and vales—
Of snaix that crawl, of beasts that yowl, of
birds that flap and trill
In the wild egregious altitude of Penn-Yan
Bill!

Why, over all those mountain peaks his
honest feet have trod—

So high above the rest of us he seemed to
walk with God;
He's breathed the breath of heaven as it
floated pure and free
From the everlasting snowcaps to the mighty
western sea;
He's heard the awful silence that thunders
in the ear:
"There is a great Jehovah, and His biding
place is here!"
These—these the solemn voices and these
the sights that thrill
In the far-away Montana of Penn-Yan Bill!

Of course she had to love him, for it was
her nature to—
And she'll wed him in the summer, if what
we hear is true;
The blue-grass will be waving in that cool
Kentucky glade
Where the black-eyed-Susans cluster in the
pleasant walnut shade—
Where the doves make mournful music and
the locust trills a song
To the brook that through the pasture
scampers merrily along;

And speechless pride and rapture ineffable
shall fill
The beatific bosom of Penn-Yan Bill.

Oct. 15th, 1887

